

# ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

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## Redfield Middle School student calls on President Obama for help (White Hall Journal)

In Lieu of the White Hall School Board's decision on Jan. 8, to close the Redfield Middle School facilities upon the completion of the current school year, due to what White Hall School District Superintendent, Dr. Larry Smith explains as being due to financial issues that the district will be facing in the coming years related to increased expenditures for health insurance, federal sequestration, teacher retirement and reduced revenue because of declined enrollment, in addition to facing a major shift in how the State determines suitability for school facilities which will have a direct impact on how the district utilizes its facilities, one RMS student is taking steps of her own in hopes of a better outcome. Seventh grader, Sara Farley, daughter of Lynn and Greg Farley, wrote a letter to President Barak Obama asking for his help. The letter was mailed on Jan. 19th. Here is here letter:

Dear Mr. President Obama,

My name is Sara Beth Farley. I live in Redfield, Arkansas. I'm only 13 years old. I am writing to you due to the fact that the White Hall School Board in Arkansas has decided to close down our Redfield Middle School. It pains me to see them shut down such a big and major part of our town. It may not be such a big deal to many people. But most of us, if not all of us here want our school to stay open. I feel that they are making a very big mistake by shutting down our school. I'm asking you to please try everything in your power to save our school! I am positive if they close our school, then our whole town, Redfield, will most likely never be the same. The Redfield Middle School is a very major part of our town. It is a very big reason why most families move down here so that they can be closer to jobs and closer to the school. By shutting down our school they are practically shutting down Redfield.

If they do not keep our Redfield Middle School open, then it will surely affect us kids education, and it will completely affect most teachers jobs. No matter what we will not stop fighting for our school to stay open. So I'm asking you, don't let them shut down our school please. Our town is growing more and more and we don't wanna see such hard work to go to waste.

Please Help Us!!!

Sincerely, Sara Beth Farley

Farley says it is her love for Redfield Middle School that prompted her to write a letter to the President, which was sent out on Jan 19th.. "It's a big part of my life, says Farley, and I don't wanna see them close down such a high achieving school." Farley feels that when President Obama sees her letter, that maybe he will find it in his heart to help keep RMS open. And though she is only 13 years old, Farley says she will continue to do everything she possibly can to try to save the school. "I will not sit back and just watch them take our school away from all of us," added Farley. When asked what her hopes and expectations were for the outcome she says that she hopes he will actually help. "I hope that he will see my letter and actually do something that will truly help our school to keep it open, said Farley. The outcome I expect and hope will happen is that the President will actually let me know what he thinks, and to help us no matter what it takes." she concluded.

### **Batesville High School opens new wing, steps up security (KAIT, Jonesboro)**

Video available at <http://www.kait8.com/story/21219227/batesville-high-school-opens-new-facilities-more-changes-coming>

BATESVILLE, AR (KAIT) – Visitors may notice a few changes to the Batesville High School campus this semester, but not all of them are cosmetic.

Crews took about a year to complete upgrades to the high school worth about \$5 million, which included adding a new wing onto the main building.

"Shortly after Christmas break, we moved in and we've had classes out here," said Principal David Campbell. "The kids really love the new facility."

The facility features 15 new classrooms that house the foreign language, math and science departments in three distinct areas.

"We have 15 classrooms," Campbell said, "and that includes three state-of-the-art science labs and classroom spaces."

The district also used money to create a new common area for students and to revamp counseling and administrative offices, which are connected to the only entry into the school after 8 a.m.

"When parents come in," Campbell said, "they're directed to the secretary, and then when she finds out where they need to go, she can buzz them out to that area. Of course, they sign in [too]."

"It's just another security measure," he added, "that the board and the district have put into place to better serve our students."

Limiting entry to a single door is just one part of a continued effort to step up security at the school.

"Of course our district is even looking at further measures that we can do in the future to have a safer campus," Campbell said.

The district is planning a few more upgrades to safety and security for its various campuses, but the proposed changes all hinge upon voters approving a millage increase on April 9.

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### **Legislator escorted out after rambling (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas legislative leaders said Friday that they're not sure why a lawmaker gave an incoherent speech on the House floor and had to be escorted from the chamber.

State Rep. Mark McElroy, D-Tillar, went to the House podium early in Friday's session and delivered a rambling, incoherent speech that referred to the morning prayer and praised the governor and other lawmakers.

Several minutes later, amid a debate on a guns-on campus bill, McElroy interrupted a speaker by standing up and applauding. The former Desha County judge was then assisted as he left the chamber.

House Minority Leader Greg Leding, D-Fayetteville, said he believed McElroy suffered some sort of medical episode and was seen by a doctor at the Capitol before leaving the building on his own.

McElroy didn't respond to calls or an e-mail Friday.

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### **Legislative summary (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

TITLE ROCK — This is a summary list of bills (by bill number, lead sponsor and title) introduced through Friday in the 89th General Assembly, except for appropriation bills, which, along with other bills and resolutions, may be found at the legislative website: [www.arkleg.state.ar.us](http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us)

#### **HOUSE**

HB1367, Vines - Concerning a garnishment against the state or political subdivision after judgment.

HB1368, Vines - To amend the laws concerning the parties qualified to hold a permit issued to a publicly traded corporation or to a corporation that holds multiple permits; to require that an executive officer or director be identified.

HB1369, Lenderman - To require pawn shops and pawnbrokers to electronically upload records to assist the investigation of crimes.

HB1383, Vines - To amend the law concerning contract bidding to make the requirements uniform.

HB1384, Miller - To require that providers for certain Medicaid waiver programs be tested for illegal drug use.

HB1385, Payton - To locate the North Central Arkansas District Fair and Livestock Show in Cleburne County.

HB1386, Rice - To allow certain nonresidential business consumers to opt out of utility-sponsored energy conservation programs and measures and direct their own energy conservation programs and measures; and to declare an emergency.

HB1387, Payton - To require a private club permit applicant in a dry territory to obtain the approval of the city or county governing body.

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### **Calendar (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

LITTLE ROCK — This is a calendar of public events of the 89th General Assembly for Monday, the 36th day of the 2013 legislative session.

#### **HOUSE**

10 a.m. Advanced Communications and Information Technology Committee, Room 151.

1:30 p.m. House convenes.

#### **SENATE**

1:30 p.m. Senate convenes.

10 minutes after adjournment, Transportation, Technology and Legislative Affairs Committee, Room 309.

ALSO

10 a.m. Joint Committee on Public Retirement and Social Security Programs, Room 130.

11 a.m. Legislative Black Caucus, Room 149.

2 p.m. Freshman Caucus, Room 171.

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### **LR district files formal notice of appeal (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

LITTLE ROCK — An attorney for the Little Rock School District notified a federal appeals court Friday that the district will be challenging a Jan. 17 decision on charter schools issued by U.S. District Judge D. Price Marshall Jr.

The appeal notice submitted to the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals at St. Louis followed the Little Rock School Board's 5-2 vote Thursday night to take Marshall's decision against the district to the higher court.

Marshall's decision rejected the Little Rock district's claim that the state violated a 1989 desegregation agreement with the three Pulaski County school districts by authorizing the establishment of independently run, public charter schools.

That 1989 agreement obligated the state to make annual desegregation payments to the three districts and otherwise support their desegregation efforts.

There are now 10 charter schools in Pulaski County, some with multiple campuses. Also, the Virtual Academy, an online charter school serving students statewide, is based in Little Rock.

Attorneys for the Joshua intervenors who represent black students and the Little Rock district argued before Marshall that the independently run charter schools compete for students with district desegregation programs, such as magnet schools and the majority-to-minority student interdistrict transfer program, that the state committed to support.

Marshall's order on the charter schools preserves the existing charter schools in Pulaski County and clears the way for new ones.

According to the appeal notice, the Little Rock district will argue to the 8th Circuit that the district court's interpretation of the 1989 settlement was incorrect, that the district court improperly denied the district's request for additional information from the state, and that the district court erred in granting the state's motion for summary judgment and holding no trial on the charter school issues.

Detailed, written arguments in the appeal will be filed later by the school district and responses will be made by attorneys for the state and the charter school intervenors in the case.

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## **'Faith-based' preschools in bill (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

LITTLE ROCK — A bill has been filed in the Arkansas House of Representatives that would allow state money to fund "faith-based" preschools.

House Bill 1352, filed Thursday by Rep. Randy Alexander, R-Fayetteville, would allow funds from the Arkansas Better Chance Program to go to a "faith-based" preschool "if the program is selected by the parent of a child" enrolled in the preschool. ABC is a state-funded preschool program for low income families.

The bill would remove this sentence from Arkansas Code Annotated 6-45-106(a)(1)(B): "All applications submitted by sectarian or sectarian-affiliated programs must first be reviewed to assure that any approval of funding will not result in a violation of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution."

Ian Smith, staff attorney for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said if the bill were to pass, it would be a constitutional violation for the program to provide funds that "directly subsidize religious activity."

Besides, Smith said, the Arkansas departments of Human Services and Education have pages of regulations about how preschools apply for, receive and must spend money within the Arkansas Better Chance Program.

"Presumably the goal here is to try and make it so that the state can argue that a private party is choosing where state funds go, rather than the state," Smith said via e-mail. "But it does not look to me like the bill makes any substantive changes into how ABC money is actually allocated. ... Turning a program like ABC into a full-on voucher system requires significantly more work than these folks have put into it."

Amy Webb, a spokesman for the Human Services Department, said the legislation will be reviewed.

"For now, what I can tell you is that we will continue to ensure that we are upholding the requirements of the Constitution by ensuring that state funds are not spent on religious teachings," she said. "As always, we also will continue to work with faith based organizations that provide important care and education to children across the state."

Based in Washington, D.C., Americans United for Separation of Church and State filed complaints in 2011 about three Northwest Arkansas preschools that had religious instruction while also receiving state funds from the Arkansas Better Chance Program. The schools were operated by two state legislators. Growing God's Kingdom in West Fork is owned by state Rep. Justin Harris, R-West Fork, and his wife, Marsha Harris. Sen. Johnny Key, R-Mountain Home, and his wife, Shannon Key, operated two preschools in Mountain Home: Noah's Ark Preschool and Open Arms Learning Center. The Keys sold their interest in those schools in December, Webb said.

Harris, a co-sponsor of HB1352, said his intent was to remove the sentence regarding sectarian schools.

"This will get them off the hook of discriminating against religious organizations," Harris said Friday. "We were looking at maybe wanting to overhaul the whole ABC program."

Growing God's Kingdom has received more than \$3 million in grants through the Arkansas Better Chance Program since 2005, according to figures from Human Services Department.

The two Mountain Home preschools have received \$1.5 million through the program since the 2007-08 school year.

The Americans United complaints resulted in a new rule being drafted by the Human Services and Education departments to address religious instruction in preschools. Among other things, the new rule forbids prayer led by a teacher or administrator.

HB1352 has been referred to the House Education Committee.

Sen. Cecile Bledsoe, R-Rogers, is also a primary sponsor of the bill. It has 22 co-sponsors. Rep. Butch Wilkins, D-Bono, was the lone Democrat among the sponsors.